

he shall be advised from time to time of changes therein.

[40 FR 23272, May 29, 1975, as amended at 49 FR 44086, Nov. 2, 1984; 62 FR 9075, Feb. 28, 1997]

**§ 292.3 Professional conduct for practitioners—Rules and procedures.**

(a) *General provisions—*(1) *Authority to sanction.* An adjudicating official or the Board of Immigration Appeals (the Board) may impose disciplinary sanctions against any practitioner if it finds it to be in the public interest to do so. It will be in the public interest to impose disciplinary sanctions against a practitioner who is authorized to practice before the Service when such person has engaged in criminal, unethical, or unprofessional conduct, or in frivolous behavior, as set forth in § 3.102 of this chapter. In accordance with the disciplinary proceedings set forth in part 3 of this chapter, an adjudicating official or the Board may impose any of the following disciplinary sanctions:

(i) Expulsion, which is permanent, from practice before the Board and the Immigration Courts or the Service, or before all three authorities;

(ii) Suspension, including immediate suspension, from practice before the Board and the Immigration Courts or the Service, or before all three authorities;

(iii) Public or private censure; or

(iv) Such other disciplinary sanctions as the adjudicating official or the Board deems appropriate.

(2) *Persons subject to sanctions.* Persons subject to sanctions include any practitioner. A practitioner is any attorney as defined in § 1.1(f) of this chapter who does not represent the federal government, or any representative as defined in § 1.1(j) of this chapter. Attorneys employed by the Department of Justice shall be subject to discipline pursuant to paragraph (i) of this section.

(b) *Grounds of discipline as set forth in § 3.102 of this chapter.* It is deemed to be in the public interest for the adjudicating official or the Board to impose disciplinary sanctions as described in paragraph (a)(1) of this section against any practitioner who falls within one or more of the categories enumerated

in § 3.102 of this chapter, with the exception of paragraphs (k) and (l) of that section, but these categories do not constitute the exclusive grounds for which disciplinary sanctions may be imposed in the public interest. Nothing in this regulation should be read to denigrate the practitioner's duty to represent zealously his or her client within the bounds of the law.

(c) *Immediate suspension and summary disciplinary proceedings; duty of practitioner to notify the Service of conviction or discipline—*(1) *Petition.* The Office of the General Counsel of the Service shall petition the Board to suspend immediately from practice before the Service any practitioner who has been found guilty of, or pleaded guilty or *nolo contendere* to, a serious crime, as defined in § 3.102(h) of this chapter, or who has been disbarred or suspended on an interim or final basis by, or has resigned with an admission of misconduct from, the highest court of any state, possession, territory, commonwealth, or the District of Columbia, or any Federal court. A copy of the petition shall be forwarded to the Office of the General Counsel of EOIR, which may submit a written request to the Board that entry of any order immediately suspending a practitioner before the Service also apply to the practitioner's authority to practice before the Board or the Immigration Courts. Proof of service on the practitioner of EOIR's request to broaden the scope of any immediate suspension must be filed with the Board.

(2) *Immediate suspension.* Upon the filing of a petition for immediate suspension by the Office of the General Counsel of the Service, together with a certified copy of a court record finding that a practitioner has been so found guilty of a serious crime, or has been so disciplined or has so resigned, the Board shall forthwith enter an order immediately suspending the practitioner from practice before the Service and/or the Board and Immigration Courts, notwithstanding the pendency of an appeal, if any, of the underlying conviction or discipline, pending final disposition of a summary proceeding, as provided in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. Such immediate suspension will continue until imposition of a

final administrative decision. Upon good cause shown, the Board may set aside such order of immediate suspension when it appears in the interest of justice to do so. If a final administrative decision includes the imposition of a period of suspension, time spent by the practitioner under immediate suspension pursuant to this paragraph may be credited toward the period of suspension imposed under the final administrative decision.

(3) *Summary disciplinary proceedings.* The Office of the General Counsel of the Service shall promptly initiate summary disciplinary proceedings against any practitioner described in paragraph (c)(1) of this section. Summary proceedings shall be initiated by the issuance of a Notice of Intent to Discipline, accompanied by a certified copy of the order, judgment and/or record evidencing the underlying criminal conviction or discipline. Summary proceedings shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions set forth in §§ 3.105 and 3.106 of this chapter. Any such proceeding shall not be concluded until all direct appeals from an underlying criminal conviction have been completed.

(i) In matters concerning criminal convictions, a certified copy of the court record, docket entry, or plea shall be conclusive evidence of the commission of that crime in any summary disciplinary hearing based thereon.

(ii) In the case of a summary proceeding based upon a final order of disbarment or suspension, or a resignation with an admission of misconduct, (i.e., reciprocal discipline), a certified copy of a judgment or order of discipline shall establish a rebuttable presumption of the professional misconduct. Disciplinary sanctions shall follow in such a proceeding unless the attorney can rebut the presumption by demonstrating by clear, unequivocal, and convincing evidence that:

(A) The underlying disciplinary proceeding was so lacking in notice or opportunity to be heard as to constitute a deprivation of due process;

(B) There was such an infirmity of proof establishing the practitioner's professional misconduct as to give rise to the clear conviction that the adjudicating official could not, consistent

with his or her duty, accept as final the conclusion on that subject; or

(C) The imposition of discipline by the adjudicating official would result in grave injustice.

(4) *Duty of practitioner to notify the Service of conviction or discipline.* Any practitioner who has been found guilty of, or pleaded guilty or *nolo contendere* to, a serious crime, as defined in § 3.102(h) of this chapter, or who has been disbarred or suspended by, or who has resigned with an admission of misconduct from, the highest court of any state, possession, territory, commonwealth, or the District of Columbia, or by any Federal court, must notify the Office of the General Counsel of the Service of any such conviction or disciplinary action within 30 days of the issuance of the initial order, even if an appeal of the conviction or discipline is pending. Failure to do so may result in immediate suspension as set forth in paragraph (c)(1) of this section. This duty to notify applies only to convictions for serious crimes or to orders imposing discipline for professional misconduct entered on or after July 27, 2000.

(d) *Filing of complaints; preliminary inquiries; resolutions; referral of complaints—*(1) *Filing of complaints—*(i) *Misconduct occurring before Service.* Complaints of criminal, unethical, or unprofessional conduct, or of frivolous behavior before the Service by a practitioner shall be filed with the Office of the General Counsel of the Service. Disciplinary complaints must be submitted in writing and must state in detail the information that supports the basis for the complaint, including, but not limited to, the names and addresses of the complainant and the practitioner, the date(s) of the conduct or behavior, the nature of the conduct or behavior, the individuals involved, the harm or damages sustained by the complainant, and any other relevant information. Any individual may file a complaint with the Office of the General Counsel of the Service. The Office of the General Counsel of the Service shall notify the Office of the General Counsel of EOIR of any disciplinary complaint that pertains, in whole or in

part, to a matter before the Board or the Immigration Courts.

(ii) *Misconduct occurring before the Board and the Immigration Courts.* Complaints of criminal, unethical, or unprofessional conduct, or of frivolous behavior before the Board and the Immigration Courts by a practitioner shall be filed with the Office of the General Counsel of EOIR pursuant to the procedures set forth in § 3.104(a) of this chapter.

(2) *Preliminary inquiry.* Upon receipt of a disciplinary complaint or on its own initiative, the Office of the General Counsel of the Service will initiate a preliminary inquiry. If a complaint is filed by a client or former client, the complainant thereby waives the attorney-client privilege and any other applicable privilege, to the extent necessary to conduct a preliminary inquiry and any subsequent proceeding based thereon. If the Office of the General Counsel of the Service determines that a complaint is without merit, no further action will be taken. The Office of the General Counsel of the Service may, in its discretion, close a preliminary inquiry if the complainant fails to comply with reasonable requests for assistance, information, or documentation. The complainant and the practitioner shall be notified of any such determination in writing.

(3) *Resolutions reached prior to the issuance of a Notice of Intent to Discipline.* The Office of the General Counsel of the Service, in its discretion, may issue warning letters and admonitions, and may enter into agreements in lieu of discipline, prior to the issuance of a Notice of Intent to Discipline.

(4) *Referral of complaints of criminal conduct.* If the Office of the General Counsel of the Service receives credible information or allegations that a practitioner has engaged in criminal conduct, the Office of the General Counsel of the Service shall refer the matter to the Inspector General and, if appropriate, to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In such cases, in making the decision to pursue disciplinary sanctions, the Office of the General Counsel of the Service shall coordinate in advance with the appropriate investigative and prosecutorial authorities

within the Department to ensure that neither the disciplinary process nor criminal prosecutions are jeopardized.

(e) *Notice of Intent to Discipline—(1) Issuance of Notice to practitioner.* If, upon completion of the preliminary inquiry, the Office of the General Counsel of the Service determines that sufficient prima facie evidence exists to warrant charging a practitioner with professional misconduct as set forth in § 3.102 of this chapter, it will issue a Notice of Intent to Discipline to the practitioner named in the complaint. This notice will be served upon the practitioner by personal service as defined in § 103.5a of this chapter. Such notice shall contain a statement of the charge(s), a copy of the preliminary inquiry report, the proposed disciplinary sanctions to be imposed, the procedure for filing an answer or requesting a hearing, and the mailing address and telephone number of the Board.

(2) *Copy of Notice to EOIR; reciprocity of disciplinary sanctions.* A copy of the Notice of Intent to Discipline shall be forwarded to the Office of the General Counsel of EOIR. The Office of the General Counsel of EOIR may submit a written request to the Board or the adjudicating official requesting that any discipline imposed upon a practitioner which restricts his or her authority to practice before the Service also apply to the practitioner's authority to practice before the Board and the Immigration Courts. Proof of service on the practitioner of any request to broaden the scope of the proposed discipline must be filed with the adjudicating official.

(3) *Answer—(i) Filing.* The practitioner shall file a written answer to the Notice of Intent to Discipline with the Board as provided in § 3.105(c) of this chapter.

(ii) *Failure to file an answer.* Failure to file an answer within the time period prescribed in the Notice of Intent to Discipline, except where the time to answer is extended by the Board, shall constitute an admission of the allegations in the Notice of Intent to Discipline and no further evidence with respect to such allegations need be adduced. Upon such a default by the practitioner, the Office of the General Counsel of the Service shall submit to

the Board proof of personal service of the Notice of Intent to Discipline. The practitioner shall be precluded thereafter from requesting a hearing on the matter. The Board shall adopt the recommended disciplinary sanctions in the Notice of Intent to Discipline and issue a final order as provided in § 3.105(d) of this chapter. A practitioner may file a motion to set aside a final order of discipline issued pursuant to this paragraph, with service of such motion on the Office of the General Counsel of the Service, provided:

(A) Such a motion is filed within 15 days of service of the final order; and

(B) His or her failure to file an answer was due to exceptional circumstances (such as serious illness of the practitioner or death of an immediate relative of the practitioner, but not including less compelling circumstances) beyond the control of the practitioner.

(f) *Hearing and disposition; appeal; reinstatement proceedings.* Upon the filing of an answer, the matter shall be heard and decided according to the procedures set forth in § 3.106(a), (b), and (c) of this chapter. The Office of the General Counsel of the Service shall represent the government. Reinstatement proceedings shall be conducted according to the procedures set forth in § 3.107 of this chapter.

(g) *Referral.* In addition to, or in lieu of, initiating disciplinary proceedings against a practitioner, the Office of the General Counsel of the Service may notify any appropriate Federal and/or state disciplinary or regulatory authority of any complaint filed against a practitioner. Any final administrative decision imposing sanctions against a practitioner (other than a private censure) shall be reported to any such disciplinary or regulatory authority in every jurisdiction where the disciplined practitioner is admitted or otherwise authorized to practice. In addition, the Office of the General Counsel of the Service shall transmit notice of all public discipline imposed under this rule to the National Lawyer Regulatory Data Bank maintained by the American Bar Association.

(h) *Confidentiality—(1) Complaints and preliminary inquiries.* Except as otherwise provided by law or regulation, in-

formation concerning complaints or preliminary inquiries is confidential. A practitioner whose conduct is the subject of a complaint or preliminary inquiry, however, may waive confidentiality, except that the Office of the General Counsel of the Service may decline to permit a waiver of confidentiality if it is determined that an ongoing preliminary inquiry may be substantially prejudiced by a public disclosure before the filing of a Notice of Intent to Discipline.

(i) *Disclosure of information for the purpose of protecting the public.* The Office of the General Counsel of the Service may disclose information concerning a complaint or preliminary inquiry for the protection of the public when the necessity for disclosing information outweighs the necessity for preserving confidentiality in circumstances including, but not limited to, the following:

(A) A practitioner has caused, or is likely to cause, harm to client(s), the public, or the administration of justice, such that the public or specific individuals should be advised of the nature of the allegations. If disclosure of information is made pursuant to this paragraph, the Office of the General Counsel of the Service may define the scope of information disseminated and may limit the disclosure of information to specified individuals or entities;

(B) A practitioner has committed criminal acts or is under investigation by law enforcement authorities;

(C) A practitioner is under investigation by a disciplinary or regulatory authority, or has committed acts or made omissions that may reasonably result in investigation by such an authority;

(D) A practitioner is the subject of multiple disciplinary complaints and the Office of the General Counsel of the Service has determined not to pursue all of the complaints. The Office of the General Counsel of the Service may inform complainants whose allegations have not been pursued of the status of any other preliminary inquiries or the manner in which any other complaint(s) against the practitioner have been resolved.

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(ii) *Disclosure of information for the purpose of conducting a preliminary inquiry.* The Office of the General Counsel of the Service, in the exercise of discretion, may disclose documents and information concerning complaints and preliminary inquiries to the following individuals or entities:

(A) To witnesses or potential witnesses in conjunction with a complaint or preliminary inquiry;

(B) To other governmental agencies responsible for the enforcement of civil or criminal laws;

(C) To agencies and other jurisdictions responsible for conducting disciplinary investigations or proceedings;

(D) To the complainant or a lawful designee; and

(E) To the practitioner who is the subject of the complaint or preliminary inquiry or the practitioner's counsel of record.

(2) *Resolutions reached prior to the issuance of a Notice of Intent to Discipline.* Resolutions, such as warning letters, admonitions, and agreements in lieu of discipline, reached prior to the issuance of a Notice of Intent to Discipline, will remain confidential. However, such resolutions may become part of the public record if the practitioner becomes subject to a subsequent Notice of Intent to Discipline.

(3) *Notices of Intent to Discipline and action subsequent thereto.* Notices of Intent to Discipline and any action that takes place subsequent to their issuance, except for the imposition of private censures, may be disclosed to the public, except that private censures may become part of the public record if introduced as evidence of a prior record of discipline in any subsequent disciplinary proceeding. Settlement agreements reached after the issuance of a Notice of Intent to Discipline may be disclosed to the public upon final approval by the adjudicating official or the Board. Disciplinary hearings are open to the public, except as noted in § 3.106(a)(v) of this chapter.

(i) *Discipline of government attorneys.* Complaints regarding the conduct or behavior of Department attorneys, Immigration Judges, or Board Members shall be directed to the Office of Professional Responsibility, United States

Department of Justice. If disciplinary action is warranted, it shall be administered pursuant to the Department's attorney discipline procedures.

[65 FR 39531, June 27, 2000]

#### § 292.4 Appearances.

(a) An appearance shall be filed on the appropriate form by the attorney or representative appearing in each case. During Immigration Judge or Board proceedings, withdrawal and/or substitution of counsel is permitted only in accordance with §§ 3.16 and 3.36 respectively. During proceedings before the Service, substitution may be permitted upon the written withdrawal of the attorney or representative of record, or upon notification of the new attorney or representative. When an appearance is made by a person acting in a representative capacity, his or her personal appearance or signature shall constitute a representation that under the provisions of this chapter he or she is authorized and qualified to represent. Further proof of authority to act in a representative capacity may be required. A notice of appearance entered in application or petition proceedings must be signed by the applicant or petitioner to authorize representation in order for the appearance to be recognized by the Service.

(b) *Availability of records.* During the time a case is pending, and except as otherwise provided in § 103.2(b) of this chapter, a party to a proceeding or his attorney or representative shall be permitted to examine the record of proceeding in a Service office. He may, in conformity with § 103.10 of this chapter, obtain copies of Service records or information therefrom and copies of documents or transcripts of evidence furnished by him. Upon request, he may in addition, be loaned a copy of the testimony and exhibits contained in the record of proceeding upon giving his receipt for such copies and pledging that it will be surrendered upon final disposition of the case or upon demand. If extra copies of exhibits do not exist, they shall not be furnished free on loan; however, they shall be made available for copying or purchase of